



## **Submission to Senate inquiry into Alcohol reduction Bill 2007. March 2008**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Young Media Australia is a unique not-for-profit national community organisation based in Adelaide. Its members share a strong commitment to the promotion of the healthy development of Australian children. Their particular interest and expertise is in the role that media experiences play in that development.

Our mission is to promote a quality media environment for Australian children and to raise community awareness of children's needs in relation to the media.

YMA is committed to promoting better choices, and providing stronger voices in children's media.

**Our core activities** include the collection of research and information about the impact of media on children's development, and advocacy for the needs and interests of children in relation to the media. Our members (a wide range of SA and national organisations and individuals) have a special interest and expertise in media issues and children.

Young Media Australia's core services include

- a 24/7 freecall helpline 1800 700 357,
- a website [www.youngmedia.org.au](http://www.youngmedia.org.au) containing a wealth of media-related information (attracting over 900 visits per day),
- a popular child-friendly movie review service (*Know before you go*),
- the development of parent media awareness materials, and
- making submissions, and participating in media interviews, related to media regulation.

### **These services**

- provide parents with information and strategies about media impact on their children's development (especially in early childhood);
- promote the interests of children in relation to the media
- provide parents, as consumers of media, with a voice in shaping media output and regulation

### **Organisational structure**

Young Media Australia (YMA) is the trading name for the Australian Council on Children and the Media.

- The ACCM has a national Board representative of all Australian states and its corporate members
- YMA has a comprehensive organisational membership which includes ECA (Early Childhood Australia (formerly AECA Australian Early Childhood Association), ACSSO (Australian Council of State Schools Organisations), APC (Australian Parents Council), AHISA (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia), AEU (Australian Education Union), SAPPA (South Australian Primary Principals Association), Federation of NSW P&C (Parents & Citizens), Mothers' Union in Australia

## **SUMMARY COMMENT**

YMA welcomes the opportunity to comment on this important issue

YMA supports the overall thrust of this Bill

We wish to make particular comment on

- a) the effectiveness of alcohol advertising
- b) what constitutes an advertisement
- c) restricting the time for screening alcohol advertising
- d) defining alcohol ads "which are aimed at children"

### **a) the effectiveness of alcohol advertising**

There are numerous research studies which attest to the effectiveness of the advertising of alcohol in impacting on children and young people's consumption of alcohol.

YMA draws the attention of the Committee to an overview of advertising impact on children, to be found in American Psychological Association (2004) *Report of the Taskforce on advertising and children*.

At page 6 of the full report, the Taskforce finds that:

"a variety of studies have found a substantial relationship between children's viewing of tobacco and alcohol ads and positive attitudes towards consumption of such products. Children find many such commercials attractive ... and consequently have high brand awareness of such products and positive attitudes toward them. These products and their spokescharacters have been found featured in programming and publications frequently viewed by minors, and reviews of this research (including the Surgeon general's analysis) conclude that advertising of them contributes to youth smoking and drinking. "

Further findings on this topic, can be found at Appendix 1 of this submission.

### **b) what is an advertisement, and why only TV?**

The issue of what constitutes an advertisement is an important one.

YMA believes that ACMA should revise and expand the definition of “direct advertisements for alcohol products” so that “sponsorships or commercials for companies that .... )” do qualify as advertisements. These are presently excluded in the Commercial Television Industry Code of practice para 6.11).

Further, YMA believes that advertising on the Internet should be covered by similar provisions. As should be internet sites that are set up by alcohol companies and which encourage underage young people to visit.

**c) restriction of alcohol advertising**

YMA considers that the 9pm curfew should be later, eg 9.30 or 10pm, in recognition of the fact that many adolescents are still viewing until that time.

Under the present Free to Air Code of Practice, alcohol ads can be screened in sporting events. YMA urges the Committee to look closely at the issues around linking any alcohol advertising with sporting events (see Appendix 1).

**d) what constitutes an ad “aimed at children”**

YMA recommends that neither the Bill nor ACMA, use the phrase “an alcohol advertisement that is aimed at children”. To define an “advertisement directed at children” is a complex question, and one that has been reviewed extensively in the context of the food advertising debate.

The prohibition of ads that have “strong or evident appeal” to children may be a better way to go, though the question is raised, “evident” to whom? And who will bear the burden of proof that an ad does or does not have “evident” appeal?

We apologise for the brevity of this submission, and will be happy to expand on issues raised if needed.



Barbara Biggins OAM  
Hon CEO

## YOUNG MEDIA AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION: APPENDIX 1

### Extract from American Psychological Association report on advertising and children 2004

#### *Positive Attitudes Toward Tobacco and Alcohol Consumption*

Although some observers may argue that there is nothing harmful about the consumption of snacks and sweets if carried out in moderation, there are other widely advertised products that are intrinsically harmful to children's physical and psychological development, even when consumed in moderation. The most obvious of these products are tobacco and alcohol. Both alcohol and tobacco are considered so detrimental to the health of children that the sale of both types of products to children and adolescents is illegal in the United States. Research shows that underage smoking and drinking are rampant in the United States. The mean age of first use of alcohol declined from approximately 18 in 1968 to 16 in 1996; in 1998, one in five teenagers were alcohol drinkers (Greenblatt, 2000). Similarly, the average age of first use of cigarettes is 15.4 years (SAMHSA, 1999); in 2000, approximately 13% of those between ages 12–17 reported smoking during the previous month (SAMHSA, 2001).

The tobacco and alcohol industries publicly maintain that they do not advertise or promote their products to children or adolescents, yet evidence strongly suggests that youth are both exposed to and influenced by ads for tobacco and alcohol products (Grube, 1995; U.S. DHHS, 1994). Tobacco cannot be advertised on television, but it is heavily promoted in magazines. Although the four largest U.S. tobacco companies pledged in a Master Settlement Agreement in 1998 not to promote their products to children younger than 18 years of age, recent research reports that three of the four companies continue to advertise in magazines with a substantial youth readership (King & Siegel, 2001).

In contrast to tobacco, beer and wine are frequently advertised on television, and beer ads are especially prevalent in sports programming, which has a sizable youth audience (Grube, 1995; Slater et al., 1997). Moreover, in June 1996, the liquor industry dropped its voluntary ban on radio and television advertising (Elliot, 1996), and recent concerns have been raised about the newer "alcopops" or "starter brews." These are sweeter alcoholic drinks, such as "hard" lemonade, that have effectively targeted the underage market (Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2001).

Research shows that children notice and remember advertising for tobacco and alcohol. For example, one study showed that among 6-year-olds, Joe Camel was as recognizable as the Mousketeer logo for the Disney Channel (Fischer, Schwart, Richards, Goldstein, & Rojas, 1991). Similarly, in a study of alcohol-brand awareness, nearly as many 9- and 10-year-olds were able to identify the Budweiser frogs as could identify Bugs Bunny (Leiber, 1996).

Reviews of research demonstrate that the advertising of both tobacco and alcohol products creates more than brand awareness. The consensus of both short-term experimental research and longitudinal studies is that advertising and marketing contribute to youth smoking and alcohol consumption (Atkin, 1995; Strasburger, 2001). The research suggests that such advertising is particularly effective when it makes drinking alcohol and smoking seem normative and when it is associated with sex appeal and glamour (DHHS, 1994; Strasburger, 2001). “

<http://www.apa.org/releases/childrenads.pdf>